EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN 2024/25

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by Shumaila Latif Date of next review 01/09/2025

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	James Eldon
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Shumaila Latif
Exams officer EO	Shumaila Latif
ALS lead/SENCo	Kate Dowden
Senior leader(s) SLT	Shumaila Latif

Contents

Key staf	f involved in the plan2
Purpose	of the plan4
Оре	erating across more than one centre Error! Bookmark not defined.
Possible	causes of disruption to the exam process4
1.	Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)4
2.	ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle5
3.	Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle
4.	Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence
5.	Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice6
6.	Cyber-attack
7.	Failure of IT systems7
8.	Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)7
9. per	Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended iod7
10.	Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open
11.	Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period8
12.	Disruption in the distribution of examination papers8
13.	Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts9
14.	Assessment evidence is not available to be marked9
15.	Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services9
Further	guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning11
Ofqua	۱
JCQ	
GOV.I	JK14
	Error! Bookmark not defined.
North	ern IrelandError! Bookmark not defined.
Natio	nal Cyber Security Centre

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Manchester Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

This plan also confirms Manchester Academy's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place:

 a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including: Planning

- annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered
- annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines
- sufficient invigilators not recruited

Entries

- awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff
- candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment
- awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred

Pre-exams

- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
- confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions
- *internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators*

Exam time

- exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies
- required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies

Results and post-results

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
- the facilitation of the post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Key dates shared with SLT and CALs
- Exam calendar shared with students and staff
- Assistance to be requested from awarding bodies and The Exams Office
- Internal invigilators are aware of producing seating plans, rooming, making sure exam papers are dispatched properly
- SLT hold regular line management meeting with EO, with details saved in shared OneNote, so that details can be traced and picked up should there be an absence
- <u>exams@manchester-academy.org</u> inbox accessible by SLT as well as the Exams Officer so communications are not missed
- All policies and procedures are stored in digital shared area so they are fully accessible by SLT

2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- *candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements*
- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time

• access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Three HLTAs to assume responsibility
- SLT and EO to support in ensuring AA deadlines are met
- Learning support assistants to be used according to the exam timetable
- Support requested from awarding bodies and SENCo network group

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies

Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled

Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking

Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Information from awarding bodies websites
- Make entries on awarding bodies websites
- EO will communicate with the other members of the department of the absent member of staff and the SLT who line manages that department
- NEA progress is saved onto live centralised trackers which are accessible SLT

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams

Invigilator shortage on peak exam days

Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO to ensure multiple members of staff are trained to be invigilators following the training courses on The Exams Office website
- EO to keep track of staff who are trained should they be needed to fill in for an external invigilator
- EO to work with member of staff who organises cover (LHO) within the school to mitigate impact on wider school timetable if internal staff are used
- EO to work with Opogo to proactively book in invigilators
- EO to liaise closely with 3 internal invigilators who have worked for the centre for many years and are highly reliable

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning

Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO to work with facilities team to keep track of the condition of the main exam venues, and reduce the risk of unexpected maintenance issues causing a room to not be available
- EO to make the exam venue timetable in advance of the exam season to proactively plan for days which are heavy with exams
- The sports hall to be used as an alternative to the gym or assembly hall if there was an emergency issue on the day of an exam
- Alternative classrooms to be used if there was an emergency issue with an AA room on the day of an exam. The EO would check this room prior to the exam starting to ensure it complied with JCQ regulations e.g. removal of displays on walls etc

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO will work with IT and contact the relevant awarding bodies for guidance.
- SLT will monitor and take action required as directed by the awarding bodies.
- IT team to get support from wider IT team within the MAT
- IT team to ensure all security procedures are up to date and compliant to reduce risk
- IT team to review security and seek outside agency support if required, to ensure the centre is back to being fully safe and can not be attacked again
- If the cyber attack is significant to the point where evacuation is required, please see point 11
- All staff complete NSCS Cyber Security training to ensure they are up to date with the latest information around cyber security. Records of this training are kept by the business manager.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO to submit entries in advance of deadline and if necessary, in a paper format
- EO to seek support from Arbor MIS, with whom we have advanced support and a direct contact for our centre
- EO to save all key documents (e.g. seating plans, and registers etc) in shared digital folder, that can be recovered by IT
- EO to have physical copies of key documents (e.g. seating plans, and registers etc) in paper folders
- EO and SLT to contact awarding bodies for support
- SLT to ensure that IT support available at results release time
- SLT and EO to download results at an alternative venue via awarding bodies secure sites.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Centre has specific evacuation policy document with more details
- SLT and EO to communicate via radios to chaperone students to evacuate
- SLT and EO to have digital versions of registers and timetables, available on their laptops, in shared folder to check students are in the correct place
- EO to keep hard copies of key information for the exam (register, seating plans and evacuation policy) in purple exam box, which can be transported to new venue
- EO to liaise with exam boards if evacuation has occurred and follow their advice and procedures
- If a full evacuation is required, please see point 11

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT to instruct teachers to run an online curriculum via Microsoft Teams, as per during the COVID pandemic, to continue to support students in their revision prior to exams
- As per COVID time, if sections of the school are not available for use, but some of building is functional, KS4 would be prioritised for coming into school for the support in the run up to their exams, whilst KS3 receive a digital curriculum
- All staff have laptops so can deliver curriculum in different locations and/or remotely
- KS4 students can have classes merged together for group revision sessions in the hall / gym for continuation of the curriculum

10. Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT and EO to liaise about the cause of why there is a risk of candidates not being able to take the exam, and then make actions accordingly, for example:
 - If the risk is to do with a medical need: the medical HLTA will advise on actions and liaise with medical practitioners
 - \circ $\;$ If the risk is to do with an SEN need: the SENCo will advise on actions
 - If the risk is to do with a attendance, social or community need: the attendance team and Head of Year will advise on actions
 - If the risk is to do with safeguarding: the DSL will advise on actions and seek further support from external services if needed
- For all actions, advice will be sought from exam boards and records kept of all actions taken

11. Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT have confirmed liaison with local Mosque should relocation be required
- Address: Alfurqan Islamic Centre Manchester, 42 Great Southern St, Manchester M14 4EZ
- Contact: Mr Hassan Hassan, an Imam at the Mosque and long term governor of the school

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT and EO to liaise with IT should electronic access be needed of examination papers
- During the 2024/25 exam season, no students require modified papers (in font, size nor colour) so digital scripts should be required

- All examination papers are received, stored and distributed securely in accordance to JCQ regulations, using record keeping documents and a second member of staff to be a second pair of eyes when the EO distributes exam papers
- EO to seek advice from the exam boards if there is a disruption
- EO to keep detailed record if there is a disruption

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Centre will follow the same process as previous years using ParcelForce Education to transport examination papers
- EO to contact exam boards if there is an issue with ParcelForce Education and the papers have not been collected
- EO to contact ParcelForce and rearrange a secure and JCQ compliant delivery/collection if required
- EO to ensure the safe storage of examinations papers until collected and to keep a record of all paper collections
- EO to liaise with reception staff on expectations around delivery and collection of examination papers to and from ParcelForce Education

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO to liaise with exam boards if appropriate
- EO to keep a detailed record of what examination scripts/assessment evidence has been damaged
- No food or drink is to be consumed around examination papers by staff, to reduce risk of damage
- CALs and teachers to keep physical copies of students other internal assessments and classwork as examples of their work, should it be required for evidence of their ability
- CALs to keep digital records of the students marks and grades in internal assessments, should this be required for evidence of their ability

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Should an alternative venue be required to distribute results please see point 11
- SLT to liaise with exam boards in the case of an emergency

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England
- exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct
- opening schools in extremely bad weather guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- bomb threats procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

See also the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

In the event of disruption

- 1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- 2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- 3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- 4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- 5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure.
- 6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- 7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- 1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
- 2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- 3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take.

Exam planning

- 1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- 2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

- 1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- 2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- 3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- 4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- 5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also JCQ's guidance on special considerations

Wider communications

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The Department for Education in England, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Welsh Government will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Central Applications Office (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education should continue in 2022 to 2023 with schools remaining open and that examinations and assessments will go ahead in both autumn 2022 and summer 2023.

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for exam timetables.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur.

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated in October 2023) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-walesand-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted)

JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.

15.3 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2024. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

The designation of `contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2024, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examination**s 2023-2024 http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ notice - Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective from 11 October 2021) www.jcq.org.uk/examsoffice/other-documents

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conductingexaminations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free Web Check and Mail Check services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the NCSC website.

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

- 1. More ransomware attacks on UK education NCSC.GOV.UK
- 2. Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement
- 3. Offline backups in an online world
- 4. Backing up your data
- 5. Practical resources to help improve your cyber security
- 6. Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it
- 7. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences NCSC.GOV.UK